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NEWS MENU

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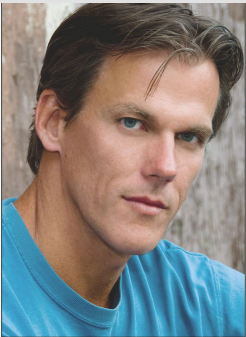
EXPERTS LIST

FACT SHEET

THEATRE PROJECT PAIRS ACTING STUDENTS WITH VETERANS



When the Ohio State Department of Theatre embarked on a new program last spring to use active workshops based on Shakespeare’s plays to interact with military personnel, veterans and their families, the goal was to help them find new ways to give expression to their experiences as they transitioned from soldiers to civilians.



Yes, that happened. But surprisingly, the graduate-student actors from Ohio State gained as much from the experience as the veterans. They didn’t just lead the workshops. They learned and grew from them, too.

“Working with the veterans was a bit surprising, because I think at the start, neither group knew what to expect,” said Linnea Bond, an MFA acting student. “We wondered who was teaching whom. We wanted to learn about their lives as veterans and about their unique perspectives, and they saw us as acting teachers. In a way we each saw the other as the experts in the room. We both brought in a lot of experience from our own worlds, and it was really exciting to learn from each other.”

The workshops were overseen by Mershon affiliate **Kevin McClatchy**, assistant professor in the Department of Theatre. The 10-week series of workshops created opportunities for the individuals to connect with one another and explore their challenges and triumphs in a safe and playful atmosphere.

Nine MFA acting students led the active workshops, attended by 10 military veterans and one active duty soldier, along with family members and caregivers. Theatre-based activities centered on Shakespeare’s *Julius Caesar*, *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, *Henry V* and *Othello* gave the groups a chance to interact.

“It was great to watch people go from wondering why they were exploring Shakespeare to having a profound and memorable communal experience,” McClatchy said. “They were doing something fun and engaging with one another ... and maybe even something more.”

Lt.Col. (Ret.) Kathy Lowrey Gallowitz, a 30-year U.S. Air Force veteran, found the process rewarding. “I saw people express emotions through acting that are probably repressed for the most part,” she said. “It was rewarding to remember how important it is to play, and to have fun, as adults and to develop a healthy respect for Shakespeare.”

She also appreciated being able to connect with the MFA students. “The nature of the workshops facilitated these connections,” she said. “It was valuable for the MFA students to meet ‘real people’ who have served (in the military) and are struggling with the aftermath of war. These special Americans are common people who have chosen to sacrifice much to defend freedom; we are neither heroes nor monsters as we are often portrayed in the media.

And that resonated with Bond. “It didn’t actually fit into my brain before that someone would put their life on the line for their belief in our freedoms and willingness to protect them,” she said. “These workshops helped me get a far more nuanced picture of our armed forces. I hope the story we are trying to tell does them some service.”

The end result of the project is a public production, titled **Beyond All Recognition**, based upon their experiences with the military veterans and their families. This new work will be performed Nov. 8 to 19 in the Roy Bowen Theatre at the Drake Performance and Event Center.

“Ultimately our mission is not so much to speak to vets, but to speak to civilians (in our audiences), to help them understand the things that we didn’t

understand before the workshops, and to educate them. I hope it does that. I hope it makes the veterans we worked with proud.”

Performance times are as follows:

- Wednesday, November 8 - 7:30 p.m.
- Thursday, November 9 - 7:30 p.m.
- Sunday, November 12 - 3 p.m.
- Sunday, November 12 - 7:30 p.m.
- Tuesday, November 14 - 7:30 p.m.
- Wednesday, November 15 - 7:30 p.m.
- Thursday, November 16 - 7:30 p.m.
- Friday, November 17 - 7:30 p.m.
- Sunday, November 19 - 3 p.m.
- Sunday, November 19 - 7:30 p.m.

There will be a post-performance discussion immediately following the Friday, November 17, show. Join the cast and invited guests for discussion that centers on the Shakespeare and Veterans initiative, with:

- Heather Seymour, creative arts director/counselor, Columbus Veterans Administration
- Zack Star, founder, VetConnect
- Mike Carrell, assistant vice provost, Ohio State Office of Military and Veterans Services
- Kevin McClatchy, project supervisor, MFA Outreach and Engagement Project

Purchase tickets by calling the Ohio State Theatre box office at (614) 292-2295 or visiting theatre.osu.edu.



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